

WOOD FLOOR SANDING MACHINE

[0001] This is a continuation-in-part application, of U.S. Serial Number 10/393,060, filed on March 20, 2003, which is a CIP of 09/935,070, filed on August 22, 2001, which in turn is a CIP of 09/911,249 filed July 23, 2001.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The field of this invention relates to power floor sanding machines with interchangeable attachments and more particularly to wood floor sanding machines.

BACKGROUND OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0003] Hardwood floors have long been a desirable trait in a home and are also common in gymnasiums, bowling alleys, and ballrooms. However, sanding and refurbishing a hardwood floor is one of the more difficult do-it-yourself tasks for a homeowner or business owner.

[0004] There are at present two basic types of sanding machines on the market. Firstly, there is a drum sander that has a single large drum that retains a sheet of abrasive material thereon. The large drum aggressively sands the floor but much care and skill must be used in feathering the machine to avoid gouging of the floor. This type of drum is usually not recommended for the do-it yourself market.

[0005] Another type of machine is a disc sander. The present sanding machines on the market commonly have a single belt that drive all three sanding discs which creates a side torque that drives the machine to one side as it sands the floor. The operator then needs to always counter the torque that promotes an uneven surface finishing and fatigue on the operator for larger sanding jobs.

[0006] Many machines also have higher operating speeds that allow little error in operating the machines. The high operating speeds can quickly cause gouging and knicks in the wood floor without having time to control or eliminate these gouges. Furthermore, the high operating speeds produce significant amount of noise.

[0007] The disc sander machines are not as aggressive as the drum type machines. Attempts have been made to increase the sanding force of the discs by increasing the weight of the sander. These weights are obtrusive horseshoe shaped steel members that are mounted on top of the sander housing. The external weights require an extra fastening device and if not tightly mounting the weights, extra chatter and vibration may occur.

[0008] These sanding machines also have a housing edge that is widely spaced from the operating sanding discs. This prevents the machine to sand close to walls. Furthermore the housing may have a high periphery which prevents it from intruding under the toe recess under many kitchen cabinets. As a result, even after adding a shoe molding to the edge of the floor, an unsanded edge may be showing. Therefore, additional smaller edge sanders need to be extensively used to approach the edge of the floor which further make the sanding process difficult.

[0009] Furthermore, the sanding creates great amount of sawdust, which needs to be controlled. The sawdust if not controlled can fill the room creating a mess and interfering with the visibility of the floor as it is being sanded. Secondly, uncontrolled sawdust, particularly when air born, may under certain circumstances be combustible from sparks or other ignition sources. If a vacuum is difficult to use on a floor sander, complacency is promoted in allowing loose saw dust to accumulate.

[0010] Furthermore, for do-it-yourself applications, an operator often leases or rents a machine which therefore requires the operator to carry the machine from the rental outlet. If the machine is not easily disassembled to easily carried components, the weight of the machine may cause difficulty for the operator to transport the sander between the rental place and his home. Furthermore, the need to rent separate, aggressive drum sanders, disc sanders, and square buffers limits the marketplace. Any person attempting to sand a floor himself may become discouraged if too many different pieces of equipment are needed or if the length of the job is too long and difficult.

[0011] The drum sanders, orbital sanders, and square buff sanders not only make it difficult for the do-it-yourself person but also for rental outlets in that the market is relatively small and the rental outlet must store a plurality of specialized machines.

[0012] Moreover, large-scale floor refinishing projects can be expensive due to the time-consuming, labor-intensive techniques that exist today. Large-scale floor refinishing projects include resurfacing gymnasiums, bowling alleys, ballrooms, and the like. Such projects usually involve hundreds of hours of cleaning and sanding the floor with an individual floor finishing machine. Thus, a large-scale project can often take several days to several weeks to complete.

[0013] What is needed is a machine that with appropriate attachments can replace a drum sander, orbital sander, square buff sander, as well as a diamond grinder, scarifier, and carpet scrubber.

[0014] What is also needed is a floor sander that can be aggressive in order to accomplish a commonly sized residential job within a reasonable amount and also be safe enough to significantly reduce gouging of the floor. What is also needed is

a floor sander that can approach an edge of a floor within the distance of an ordinary shoe molding while reducing noise, that increases control and ease of use, reduces saw dust, and provides other conveniences for making a do-it-yourself operation feasible.

[0015] What is likewise needed is an apparatus that enables relatively faster cleaning and sanding of a floor to reduce the labor hours required to finish a large-scale project.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0016] In accordance with one aspect of the invention, a power sander for a wood floor includes a housing, and a motor mounted to the housing and having a centrally positioned downwardly extending drive shaft. An inner bowl member, i.e., inner housing member, is positioned within the housing and is rotatably mounted on the drive shaft to allow rotation of the inner bowl with respect to both the housing and drive shaft. Pulleys are circumferentially spaced about the drive shaft and are rotatably connected to the inner bowl member. The axis of rotation of each pulley is parallel to the axis of rotation of the drive shaft. Each pulley constructed to have sander discs mounted thereon. A plurality of belts, with each belt preferably having a cogged inside and mounted about one pulley and engageably driven by the drive shaft.

[0017] The drive shaft and said pulleys having respective cogged peripheries for creating a positive engagement with said inner side of the respective belts. A plurality of pulley tensioners engage the outer side of a respective belt with the

outer side preferably being flat and frictionally engaged by the pulley tensioners in the form of bearings.

[0018] The belts are vertically spaced with respect to the drive shaft at a vertical position adjacent from one another. Each respective pulley is respectively vertically positioned to engage its respective belt horizontally from the engaging vertical position on the drive shaft. Each tensioner also is vertically positioned to a proper height to operably engage its respective belt.

[0019] The housing is preferably bell shaped with a downwardly extending side wall and connectable to a vacuum motor for suction of saw dust up through the bell shaped housing. The housing has an aperture for connection to a vacuum hose for allowing vacuuming of sawdust up through the housing and through the aperture. A weighted metal plate is attached to an inner bowl member. The weighted metal plate has apertures for allowing the pulley to extend therethrough. The plate has an outer periphery spaced from the side wall of said housing to define a path for the vacuuming of the saw dust.

[0020] It is desirable that a weighted plate is mounted to the inner bowl and has notches at its outer periphery to create widened gaps with the housing to increase air flow therebetween. It is also preferred that the housing has its side walls spaced within 3/8 inches from a sanding disc edge. The housing has handles mounted thereon near a front and rear portion thereof and extending upwardly therefrom. The housing also has a plurality of quick connect pins that removably connect the housing to the operating handle.

[0021] In accordance with another embodiment of the invention, the center drive shaft has a gear section, these gears are circumferentially spaced about the drive

shaft and are rotatably mounted on the inner bowl member in a coplanar fashion and operably engage the center gear section of the drive shaft. The gears having respective pulley sections affixed thereto with the pulley sections being coplanar with each other. The pulleys are coplanar with each other and with the pulley sections. The belts are also coplanar and engage a pulley section of the respective gear and the pulleys.

[0022] In accordance with another aspect of the invention, a vacuum cleaner is mounted to the operable handle. A vacuum hose operably extends from the vacuum cleaner and is resiliently flexible and stretchable from a rest length to an increased length. The distal end of the hose has a shaped nozzle that can receive a hose coupling on the housing. This structure allows the hose to be directly connected to the hose coupling without removal of the shaped nozzle for vacuuming sawdust out of the housing. The hose is also being detachable from the hose coupling to allow the shaped nozzle to be operably used. The vacuum is grounded to the power sanding machine and preferably has a metal canister.

[0023] In accordance with another embodiment of the invention, a power sander for a wood floor includes a housing, and a motor mounted to the housing with a drive shaft. An inner housing member preferably in the form of a bowl is positioned within the housing and is rotatably mounted on the drive shaft to allow rotation of the inner housing with respect to both the housing and drive shaft. Pulleys are circumferentially spaced about the drive shaft and are operably connected to the drive shaft and also rotatably connected to the inner housing member.

[0024] Each pulley is constructed to have a sanding member mounted thereon.

The sanding member includes a plate mounted to the pulley and at least one roller rotatably mounted about a horizontal axis on said plate. Each roller is fittable with an abrasive sanding layer about its outer surface and abutable to a floor surface at its bottom section.

[0025] Preferably, each roller has its axis of rotation being transverse to and intersecting the axis of rotation of the respective plate that is mounted on the pulley. It is also desirable that each roller is freewheeling on the respective plate.

[0026] In one embodiment, a plurality of rollers are circumferentially spaced about the plate with each of its axis of rotation intersecting with each other and the axis of the plate. It is preferred that the plate has cutouts for allowing the rollers to be partially recessed in the cutouts. Each roller has an axial length that is greater than its own diameter.

[0027] In accordance with a broader aspect of the invention, a power sander for a wood floor includes a housing and a motor mounted to the housing with a drive shaft. An inner rotatably driven member is positioned within the housing and is driven by the drive shaft to allow rotation of the inner rotatably driven member with respect to the housing about a vertical axis. At least one roller is rotatably mounted about a horizontal axis on the inner rotatably driven member. The roller is fittable with an abrasive sanding layer about its outer surface and abutable to a floor surface at its bottom section.

[0028] In accordance with another aspect of the invention, a power sander for a wood floor includes a rotating member that rotates about a vertical axis. Rollers are circumferentially spaced about the rotating member with each roller rotatably

mounted about a horizontal axis on the rotating member. Each horizontal axis of rotation intersects with each other and an axis of rotation of the rotating member. Each roller is freewheeling on the rotating member. Each roller is fitted with an abrasive outer sanding layer about its outer surface and abutable to a floor surface at its bottom section.

[0029] In accordance with another aspect of the invention, an attachment for a power sander includes a plate for attachment to a rotatable pulley. At least one roller is rotatably mounted about a horizontal axis onto the plate. The roller is fittable with an abrasive sanding layer about its outer surface and abutable to a floor surface at its bottom section. Each roller has its axis of rotation being transverse to and intersecting the axis of rotation of the plate. Each roller is freewheeling on the plate. Preferably, rollers are circumferentially spaced about the plate with each roller having its axis of rotation intersecting with each other. Furthermore it is desired that the plate has cutouts for allowing the rollers to be partially recessed in the cutouts. Each roller is dimensioned to have an axial length that is greater than the roller diameter.

[0030] In accordance with another aspect of the invention, an attachment for a power sander includes a plate mountable to a power sander. The plate has a plurality of carbide steel shaped cutting members mounted circumferentially about the plate. The carbide steel tips having a planar bottom surface and tapered sides to create a sharp scarifying edge.

[0031] In accordance with another aspect of the invention, a power cleaning and sanding machine for a wood floor includes a housing, a motor mounted to the housing and having a drive shaft. An inner housing member is positioned within

the housing and is rotatably mounted on the drive shaft to allow rotation of the inner housing member with respect to both the housing and drive shaft. A plurality of pulleys is circumferentially spaced about the drive shaft and is operably connected to the drive shaft, and rotatably connected to said inner housing member. Each pulley is constructed to have an abrasive member mounted thereon. The inner housing is selectively rotationally affixed to the housing by a mechanical lock that is able to lock a pulley in a circumferentially selected position about the drive shaft.

[0032] In one embodiment, the mechanical lock is in the form of a pin movable between a lower position extendable through an aperture in the housing and engaging a recess in the inner housing and an upper position where it is removed from the recess in the inner housing. Preferably, the recess in the inner housing is circumferentially positioned about the inner housing such that when the pin engages the recess, one of the pulleys is positioned toward one of the right or left sides of the housing member. In another embodiment, the housing recess in the inner housing is circumferentially positioned about the inner housing such that when the pin engages the recess, one of the pulleys is positioned at the front end of the housing.

[0033] The mechanical lock is preferably constructed to selectively lock any of the pulleys to be positioned at the left or right sides of said housing. The mechanical lock can also be constructed to selectively lock any of the pulleys at the left or right side or front end of the housing.

[0034] The housing has a first and second recess with the first recess, when engaged with the pin, locks one pulley at the left side of the housing and with the

second recess, when engaged with the pin, locks one pulley at the right side of the housing member. In another embodiment, the housing has a third recess with the third recess, when engaged with the pin, locks the pulley at the front end of the housing.

[0035] In accordance with another aspect of the invention, an operable handle extends behind the rear end of the housing. A motor is mounted to the housing and has a centrally positioned downwardly extending drive shaft. An inner housing member is positioned within the housing and is rotatably mounted on the drive shaft to allow rotation of the inner housing member with respect to both the housing and drive shaft. A plurality of pulleys is circumferentially spaced about the drive shaft and rotatably connected to the inner housing member. The axis of rotation of each pulley is parallel to the axis of rotation of the drive shaft. Each pulley is constructed to have abrasive elements mounted thereon. Belts mounted about respective pulleys are engageably driven by the drive shaft. A mechanical lock is constructed to selectively lock the inner housing against rotation with respect to the housing. The inner housing member is freely rotatable with respect to the housing when the mechanical lock is disengaged and for affixing a pulley at a side edge of the housing when engaged to affix the inner housing member with the housing.

[0036] In another embodiment of the present invention, there is provided a power cleaning and sanding machine having a plurality of floor finishing units that are positioned in a tandem arrangement.

[0037] In yet another embodiment of the present invention, there is provided a power cleaning and sanding machine having a frame and a plurality of floor

finishing units that are mounted to the frame. The plurality of floor finishing units include a housing and a motor that is mounted to the housing and that has a drive shaft. An inner housing member is positioned within the housing and is rotatably mounted on the drive shaft to allow rotation of the inner housing member with respect to both the housing and the drive shaft. A plurality of pulleys are circumferentially spaced about the drive shaft, are operably connected to the drive shaft, and are rotatably connected to the inner housing member. Each pulley is constructed to have an abrasive member mounted thereon.

[0038] In a further embodiment of the present invention, there is provided a frame for use in combination with a floor finishing unit. The frame includes one or more struts, one or more uprights attached to the struts, one or more cross-members attached to the struts, one or more beams attached to the struts, and one or more links attached to the beams.

[0039] In yet a further embodiment of the present invention, there is provided a power cleaning and sanding machine having a frame and a plurality of floor finishing units that are mounted to the frame and that are positioned in a tandem arrangement.

[0040] In still a further embodiment of the present invention, there is provided a riding floor finisher including a pusher trailer and a power cleaning and sanding machine. The power cleaning and sanding machine includes a frame and a plurality of floor finishing units mounted to the frame and positioned in a tandem arrangement.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- [0041] Reference now is made to the accompanying drawings in which:
- [0042] Figure 1 is a front perspective view of a floor sander in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;
- [0043] Figure 2 is a side elevational view of the sander shown in Figure 1;
- [0044] Figure 3 is bottom perspective view of the embodiment shown in Figure 1;
- [0045] Figure 4 is a lower perspective view showing one disc removed;
- [0046] Figure 5 is a cross sectional view taken along lines 5-5 shown in Figure 3;
- [0047] Figure 6 is a cross sectional view taken along lines 6-6 shown in Figure 3;
- [0048] Figure 7 is a bottom perspective view of the housing and inner bowl with the discs and belts removed for illustration purposes;
- [0049] Figure 8 is a fragmentary upper perspective view of the housing illustrating the lift handles, the vacuum hose connection, and the quick connect fitting between the housing and the operating handle;
- [0050] Figure 9 is a cross sectional view of the housing taken along lines 9-9 shown in Figure 1;
- [0051] Figure 10 is a schematic internal view of the vacuum that is mounted on the operating handle;
- [0052] Figure 11 is a segmented view illustrating the connection of the hose to the housing;
- [0053] Figure 12 is a segmented side elevational view of a second embodiment;
- [0054] Figure 13 is a bottom plan and partially exploded view of the embodiment shown in Figure 12;
- [0055] Figure 14 is a bottom perspective view of another embodiment;

- [0056] Figure 15 is an enlarged bottom plan view of one plate member assembly shown in Figure 14;
- [0057] Figure 16 is a cross sectional view taken along lines 16-16 shown in Figure 15;
- [0058] Figure 17 is a top plan view of another attachment for the machine shown in Figure 1;
- [0059] Figure 18 is a bottom plan view of the attachment shown in Figure 17;
- [0060] Figure 19 is a side elevational view of the attachment shown in Figure 18;
- [0061] Figure 20 is a bottom plan view of another embodiment of the invention;
- [0062] Figure 21 is a fragmentary upper perspective view of another embodiment according to the invention;
- [0063] Figure 22 is a side elevational fragmented view of the embodiment shown in Figure 21;
- [0064] Figure 23 is a side elevational fragmented view of the inner housing member shown in Figure 22;
- [0065] Figure 24 is a top plan view of the inner housing member positioned to receive the lock pin for position a pulley and abrasive element at the right edge of the sander and housing;
- [0066] Figure 25 is a top plan view similar to Figure 24 showing the pulley and abrasive element positioned at the left edge of the sander and housing;
- [0067] Figure 26 is a top plan view illustrating an alternative arrangement of recesses in which the pulley is affixed at the left edge of the sander;
- [0068] Figure 27 is a view similar to Figure 26 illustrating the pulley affixed to the right edge of the sander;

- [0069] Figure 28 is a view similar to Figure 26 illustrating a pulley affixed at the front end of the sander; and
- [0070] Figure 29 is a perspective view of a riding floor finisher in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention;
- [0071] Figure 30 is a perspective view of a portion of the riding floor finisher of Figure 29, showing a wheeled jack arrangement;
- [0072] Figure 31 is an elevational view of an arrangement for attaching a floor finishing unit to a frame;
- [0073] Figure 32 is a side elevational view of the arrangement of Figure 31, showing a height adjustment feature using phantom lines;
- [0074] Figure 33 is another side elevational view of the arrangement of Figure 31, showing a pivot adjustment feature using phantom lines;
- [0075] Figure 34 is a plan view of a portion of the riding floor finisher of Figure 29, illustrating floor finishing units in a tandem, nested delta pattern arrangement;
- [0076] Figure 35 is a plan view of a floor sander according to an alternative embodiment of the present invention;
- [0077] Figure 36 is a front elevational view of the floor sander of Figure 35;
- [0078] Figure 37 is a side elevational view of the floor sander of Figure 35;
- [0079] Figure 38 is a side elevational view of the floor sander of Figure 35, in which pivotable action of the floor sander is illustrated;
- [0080] Figure 39 is a plan view of a floor sander according to another alternative embodiment of the present invention; and
- [0081] Figure 40 is a partial cross-sectional view of the floor sander of Figure 39.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0082] Referring now to Figure 1, a floor sander 10 has a housing 12 connected to an operating handle 14. A vacuum 16 is mounted on the operating handle. The housing 12 has a generally bell shape with a side peripheral section 18 that mounts a peripheral brush 20. A motor 22 is mounted on the top portion 24 of the housing 12.

[0083] As shown in Figure 9, the motor has a drive shaft 26 that extends down through the top portion 24 of the housing. The motor 22 is electric and is operably connected to a power cord (not shown) that can conventionally be plugged into a 110 volt receptacle.

[0084] The drive shaft also extends through a center hole 28 of an inner bowl 30. The inner bowl is rotatable with both the housing 12 and the drive shaft 26. The bowl has a top portion 32 that rotatably mounts three pulleys 34 and three bearings 36 as best shown in Figures 5, 7, and 9. The pulleys 34 have a cogged periphery 38 that engages a respective cogged inner wall or inside side 42 of a belt 40. The cogged inner wall 42 of the belt also engages a central cogged pulley 44 affixed to the drive shaft 26. As the drive shaft rotates, the belt has a positive engagement with both the cogs 44 and the pulleys 34. As shown, three pulleys are each spaced about the drive shaft 120 degrees from each other.

[0085] The bearings 36 on the other hand are positioned to frictionally engage a flat outside 46 of the belt 40. Each bearing is also positioned to place tension of a respective belt 40 and to provide enhanced engagement area between the belt and the pulleys 34 and cogs 44. As best shown in Figure 5, each belt is actually tensioned by two bearings 36 which provide a pinching of the belt 40 about cog 44.

The belts are vertically positioned at different heights from each other to provide non-interference. As shown in Figure 8 the three cogs 44 are vertically positioned to engage a respective belt 40. The bearings 36 are split into an upper and lower sections 35 and 37 which each independently rotate with respect to the two adjacent belts that engage the bearing as best shown in Figure 7. As shown in Figures 3 and 4, the pulleys have a mounting system 50 which are a plurality of pins for engaging cleaning elements or other abrasive elements commonly referred to as abrasive or sanding discs 52 in a snap fit fashion. The abrasive discs are sized to approach the outer periphery 18 of the housing 12. A peripheral brush 20 comes within one inch and preferably within 3/8 inches from the sanding disc 52. In this fashion, the power sander can sand or clean floors to within the edge of the floor that will normally then be covered by conventionally dimensioned shoe molding.

[0086] As the discs are driven by the motor in the direction as shown in Figures 3 and 4, the torque exerted by the rotation of the discs on the floor is greater at distances farther away from the central axis 68 of the drive shaft 26. As such, the discs' torque tends to pull and rotate the inner bowl in the direction shown in Figures 3 and 4. Hence the inner bowl 30 and the assembly of pulleys 34 and discs 52 counter rotate with respect to the rotation of the individual pulleys 34 and discs 52. The equal circumferential spacing of the pulleys 34 and discs 54 about the central drive shaft 26 eliminates virtually all side torque forces and provides for a balanced machine.

[0087] The inner bowl 30 has a side periphery 54 that mounts a steel weight plate 56. The plate has a dual purpose for reducing wood dust from intruding into the bowl 30 where it may interfere with the operating cogs 44, pulleys 34, and belts 40

and for adding the proper amount of weight to the sander to enhance sanding forces and balance to the machine. The balance significantly reduces chatter and provides for a faster machine. It can be easily appreciated, that chatter besides reducing control of the machine can put gouges into a floor surface and ruin the objective of a smoothly sanded floor. With the balance, built in weight and lack of sideways torque, the machine can operate with disc speeds as low as 350 rpms and still provide for effective sanding of wood floors.

[0088] There is a gap 60 between the inner bowl 32 and the outer bowl 18 to allow a vacuum passage to an outlet nozzle 62 for the vacuum cleaner 16. As shown in Figure 6, the inner bowl periphery 54 may have notches 66 to increase and assure air flow for the vacuum.

[0089] The vacuum 16 has a bottom mounted motor 70 and an inlet hose 72 mounted at a top portion of a vertically oriented canister housing 74. A vacuum bag 76 is also mounted in the vertically oriented canister 74. In this way, gravity also assists in settling the wood dust particles to the bottom of the bag 76 and to reduce airborne particulate. In addition, the canister 74 is made of metal and grounded to the machine such that the probability of an static spark occurring is reduced. Sparks should be reduced near wood dust and airborne wood particulate.

[0090] A flexible stretchable hose 72 connects the vacuum 16 to the housing 12. The hose can resiliently stretch well over triple its initial rest length. The end 78 of the hose connects to the nozzle 62. As best shown in Figure 11, the end 78 has a brush or other shaped nozzle attachment 80 affixed thereto can be used by an operator as an independent vacuum cleaner to clean up saw dust and other particulates.

[0091] However, when the sanding machine 10 is operating, the hose end 78 with the attachment 80 still affixed thereto can be operably connected to the nozzle 62. The attachment 80 is shaped to receive the nozzle 62 and let the nozzle extend up to the hose and bypass the attachment 80 effective shape. In this way, the vacuum can be easily used both with the sanding machine and as an effective cleanup tool independent of the sanding machine. The machine 10 has a power switch which allows independent actuation of the vacuum without the actuation of the pulleys 34 and discs 54.

[0092] The motor for the vacuum is a two speed motor that has one speed for use during operation of the discs 52 and another higher speed when only the attachment 80 is being used for cleanup. The two speed motor allows for less noise during usage of the sanding machine. The low rpms of the power sanding discs and the lower vacuum operation provide for a sanding machine that is as quiet as a conventional wet/dry vacuum cleaner.

[0093] For ease of transportation, the housing 12 can easily disengage from and re-engage to the operating handle 14 via quick connect coupling pins 82. Furthermore to aid in transportation, the housing 12 has separate lifting handles 84 at its front and back.

[0094] A second embodiment of the machine is disclosed in Figures 12 and 13. This embodiment has three coplanar belts 140 that are mounted on pulleys 34 and smaller drive pulleys 142. The three coplanar drive pulleys 142 are driven via gear teeth 139 vertically spaced from the belt engaging section to a drive cog 144 on drive shaft 26. The three drive pulleys 142 are equally circumferentially spaced about the drive shaft 26. The belts may be optionally tensioned by bearings (not

shown) on the exterior side of the belts in the same fashion as the first described embodiment. In this way, all three belts are coplanar which provides for a more compact lower profile housing 18.

[0095] Figure 14-16 discloses an attachment to the power sander that render a more aggressive sanding operation to cut down the time it takes to remove old varnish and worn out coating on hardwood floors. The conventional discs 52 that snap fit on pins 50 are replaced by three plate assemblies 152. The plates have snap receptacles 251 like those shown in Figure 17 for engaging pins 50. The plate also mounts three freewheeling rollers 85 circumferentially mounted about the rotating axis 92 of each plate 152. The terms "freewheel" and "freewheeling" in this context means that the rollers are not powered or directly connected to the motor such as conventional drum sanders. Any rolling of the rollers is caused by the frictional action exerted from the floor as the plates and inner housing rotate.

[0096] The rollers 85 are rotatably mounted via a pin 87. The pin can be a conventional with a threaded end 88 and an engageable head 89 that engage the mounting lugs 83 that are welded to the plate 152. The roller rotates about the shank 91. If desirable, the roller may be affixed to the shank and the pin may be rotatably journalled in the lugs 83.

[0097] The roller desirably is made from a commercially available sponge rubber that has some flex to it. The outer surface 93 is fitted with a properly sized sand paper cylinder 90. The rollers and sand paper cylinder have an axial length 98 greater than their respective diameters 99. The roller and sand paper provide for a long narrow bottom section 101 along the roller that actively engages and sands

that floor. It has been found that a sand paper cylinder with a grit rating of 50 provides sufficient aggressive action for sanding hardwood floors.

[0098] The plate has a cutout section 95 to allow the roller 85 to be recessed into the plane of the plate 152 to lower the vertical profile of the plate assembly 152. In this way when discs 52 replace the attachments 152 and vice versa, the machine retains the same vertical height and the brush 20 retains a proper orientation to the ground.

[0099] In operation, the pulleys are driven by the motor via the belts to rotate the plate member about the vertical axes 92. The rollers 78 rotate about a horizontal axis 94 defined by the pin 80. The axes 92 and 94 are transverse with each other and intersect. As the pulleys drive the plates 152, the rollers are free to rotate about their respective horizontal axis 94. However, due to the relative great axial length 98 of the roller, a significant amount of scrub takes place when the rollers freewheel. The sand paper thus works on the floor and the inner bowl 30 is free to counter rotate about its axis 68.

[00100] A modified version of the freewheeling drum roller is illustrated in Figure 20. In this embodiment, three rollers 185 are mounted for free wheeling via lugs 183 on the inner bowl 130. The rollers 185 like rollers 85 have an abrasive sand paper drum mounted thereon. In this embodiment, the motor conventionally rotates the inner bowl 130 at a desired speed depending on the application. The rollers 185 freewheel as the inner housing is rotated about its axis 68. Due to scrub action, the sandpaper drum sands the floor during the operation of the power sander.

[00101] Another plate attachment device 252 is shown in Figures 17-19. In these Figures, the plate attachment 252 has six carbide steel tips 254 mounted about the periphery of the plate. The carbide steel tips have a planar bottom surface 256 and tapered sides 258 to create a sharp scarifying edge 260. This attachment 252 mounts onto the pins 50 via snap fit connections 151. This attachment is suitable for paint and adhesive removal from concrete floors, scarifying, and filing down high spots in cracked concrete floors.

[00102] The attachments 152, 252, and sanding discs 52 are all interchangeable on the pin connection 50 of power sander machine 10. The single machine 10 has the ability to aggressively sand hardwood floors, finely sand hardwood floors, and work on concrete floors. The ability of this machine to have proper floor attachments eliminates the need for renting or using multiple machines. The aggressiveness of the rollers not only eliminates the need for a separate drum sander but also speeds up the operation such that most common sized jobs may be easily completed within one half to one work day.

[00103] The embodiments shown in Figure 1-13 can be modified to work as an edger. The embodiments shown in Figures 21-28 incorporate a mechanical lock 300 mounted on the housing 12. The lock 300 can be in front of the motor 22 as shown in Figures 21 and 22 along the longitudinal axis of the sander. The lock 300 includes a pin 302 with an upper handle 304 and locking shaft 306. A bayonet pin 308 passes through the shaft 306. The shaft 306 intrudes through a cylindrical holder 310 affixed to housing 12. The holder 310 has opposing slots 312 to receive bayonet pin 308. The pin can be in a disengaged position as shown in Figure 22 with the bayonet pin 308 resting on a recess 314 on top edge 316 of holder 310.

The shaft 306 extends through an aperture 318 in the housing. The pin 302 can be rotated to and lifted over retaining hump 311 to align bayonet pin 308 with the slots 312 and lowered in holder 310 and through aperture 318. The lower end of shaft 306 can engage a recess or aperture 320 in inner housing member. As shown in Figure 24, the pin 302 when in aperture 320 rotatably locks the inner bowl 30 relative to the housing 12 such that a pulley 34 and a respective sander disc 52 is adjacent the right edge 322 of the housing 12.

[00104] In this manner, when a operator wants to concentrate on sanding or cleaning near an edge of a floor, he can lock the pulley 34 near the right edge of the sander and place the right edge of the machine at the edge of the floor. In this way, on pulley is always correctly positioned to provide more aggressive abrasive application at the edge of the floor by affixing the pulley and sander discs thereover.

[00105] In a similar manner, as illustrated in Figure 25, if a pulley 32 and sanding disc needs to be affixed near the left edge 326 of the housing 12, the pin 302 can be received in an aperture 324 positioned on the opposite side of the rotating axis 92 of a pulley or disc.

[00106] As such, whichever side edge is more convenient or accessible can be placed against the wall to sand an edge of the floor. A pulley and sanding disc is then locked in position and can rotate about its own axis 92 for more aggressive application to the edge of the floor.

[00107] For added convenience, similar apertures 320 and 324 can be placed in inner bowl member 30 such that a choice of any of the pulleys and sanders can be used for right or left edge sanding or cleaning. The pin 302 can engage any one of

the set of apertures 320 for right edge sanding and any one of the set of apertures 324 for left edge cleaning.

[00108] If there are three pulleys 34 each spaced 120° from each other as illustrated, the apertures 320 and 324 need to be 60° from each other to properly and circumferentially position and affix a pulley 34 and sander disc 52 at the left or right edge. In the illustrated embodiment aperture 320 is 30° clockwise from axis 92 while aperture 324 is 30° counterclockwise from axis 92. Both sets of apertures 320 and 324 are circumferentially spaced about a circle 327 of radius R.

[00109] Figures 26-28 show an alternative arrangement of aperture 320 and 324. In this arrangement the pin 302, holder 310 and the aperture 318 can be circumferentially offset from the central longitudinal axis 92 of the sander disc, for example by 45° in the counterclockwise direction as shown.

[00110] The set of apertures 320 and the set of apertures 324 are similar circumferentially rotated 45° in the counterclockwise direction on inner bowl member from the embodiment shown in Figure 21-25. In this fashion a third set of apertures 326 can be placed in inner bowl circumferentially between aperture 320 and 324, i.e., 30° from each aperture 320 and 324 and also on circle 327.

[00111] As with the previous embodiment, when pin 302 engages one of the apertures 320, the respective pulley 32 is positioned along the right edge 322 as shown in Figure 26. When the pin 302 engages one of the apertures 324, a respective pulley 32 is positioned along the left edge 326 as shown in Figure 27.

[00112] In addition, when pin 302 engages any one of the apertures 328, a pulley and sander disc is then affixed along the front edge, i.e., front end 330 at the central longitudinal axis of the sander machine. The sander then can sand an edge of a

floor from the front where it might be inaccessible from the right or left edges due to a tight fit that would not let the handle and the operator near the respective edge of the floor.

[00113] As with the right and left rear set of apertures 320 and 324, a third set of apertures 328 allows a choice of each pulley and disc to be used as the primary sander at the front edge 330 of the sander 10.

[00114] According to another embodiment of the present invention, Fig. 29 illustrates a riding floor finisher 400 adapted for relatively expansive and fast cleaning and sanding of a floor to reduce the labor hours required to finish a large-scale project. The finisher 400 generally includes a pusher trailer 410 used for pushing a power cleaning and sanding machine 412.

[00115] The pusher trailer 410 is an off-the-shelf powered vehicle such as a Floor Mack Ryder that is readily available from Floor-Style Products of Hastings, MI. The pusher trailer 410 is powered by an electric motor, is driven by a hydraulic transmission, gear box, axle, and two driving wheels. The pusher trailer 410 also generally includes a body, and seat mounted thereto. The pusher trailer 410 includes neither independent steering nor braking, and may include a front hitch point for connecting to the power cleaning and sanding machine 412, thereby establishing one part of an overall articulated vehicle or riding floor finisher 400.

[00116] The power cleaning and sanding machine 412 may also include a hitch point for attaching to the pusher trailer 410 to establish the other part of the articulated vehicle or riding floor finisher 400. Alternatively, the machine 412 need not be rigidly connected to the pusher trailer 400 via hitch points. Rather, the pusher trailer 410 may freely ride behind, and in abutment with, the machine 412,

whereby an operator rides on the pusher trailer 410 and pushes the machine 412. The machine 412 generally includes a main frame 414, a utilities sub-frame 416, wheeled jacks 418, and floor finishing units 420.

[00117] The main frame 414 is preferably composed of steel, but may be composed of any material including plastic, composites, or other metals including iron, aluminum, and the like. The material choice is not critical as long as the material selected is sufficiently rigid and durable. The main frame 414 includes longitudinally extending struts 422 and cross-members 424 extending transversely therebetween, and welded thereto, to provide rigidity to the main frame 414. The main frame 414 extends forward from a rearward portion proximate the pusher trailer 410 to a forward portion distal the pusher trailer 410. Beams 430 are welded to the struts 422, and extend transversely in an outboard direction away therefrom.

[00118] The utilities sub-frame 416 is preferably composed of the same material as the main frame 414 and is welded to the rear portion 426 thereof. The sub-frame 416 includes upwardly and longitudinally extending struts 432 that are interconnected by transversely extending cross-members 434 welded therebetween. A U-shaped portion 436 is welded to the upper end of the struts 432. Handles 438 are welded to the top of the U-shaped portion 436, and service panels 440 are fastened to a service panel weldment 442 that is welded to the underside of the U-shaped portion 436.

[00119] Referring now to Fig. 30, the wheeled jacks 418 are off-the-shelf devices, such as trailer jacks, that are readily available from several manufacturers including Fulton Performance Products of Mosinee, WI. As shown, a cylinder 443 of the wheeled jack 418 is welded to bracketed upright supports 444 that are welded to

the main frame 414. To provide additional support and stability, the wheeled jack 418 is specially adapted with guide cylinders 446 welded to the main frame 414 that accept guide rods 448 therethrough. The guide rods 448 terminate in a caster body 450 having caster wheels 452 mounted thereto. The end of a piston 454 is welded centrally to the caster body 450 and, as is known in the art of trailer jacks, is upwardly and downwardly displaceable by rotating a handle 455. Accordingly, the wheeled jacks 418 are specially adapted for this floor finisher application for adjusting the height of the main frame 414 with respect to the floor to be finished.

[00120] Referring now to Figs. 31-33, the floor finishing units 420 are typically positioned between the beams 430 of the main frame 414 and mounted thereto by links 456. Some of the floor finishing units 420 are mounted centrally along the main frame 414 between the struts 422 instead of between the beams 430. Nonetheless, the below-described fastening arrangement is the same, and the individual floor finishing units 420 are substantially the same as the floor finishing units previously described, except for the following described modifications.

[00121] The floor finishing units 420 have threaded bosses 462 mounted thereon, to which the links 456 are pivotably or flexibly fastened by cap screws 458 extending through holes in ends of the links 456. The links 456 extend upwardly and terminate in opposite ends that are translatably or flexibly fastened to outboard sides of the beams 430 by pairs of cap screws 458 that extend loosely through longitudinally extending slots 460 in the links 456.

[00122] Instead of welding, the links 456 are preferably fastened outboard of the beams 430 by a pair of bolts, cap screws 458, or the like. The cap screws 458 extend loosely through a longitudinally extending slot 460 in the link 456 and

thread into the beam 430. At an opposite end of the link 456, a single cap screw 458 extends loosely through the link 456 and threads into a threaded boss 462 of the floor finishing unit 420. This fastening arrangement allows for the link 456, and therefore the floor finishing unit 420, to be upwardly and downwardly displaceable with respect to the main frame 414, as depicted by phantom lines in Fig. 33. Similarly, the floor finishing unit 420 is pivotable about the single cap screw 458, as depicted by phantom lines in Fig. 34. Accordingly, the floor finishing units 420 have at least two degrees of freedom with respect to the main frame 414. Such freedom allows the present invention to be particularly forgiving and effective in finishing floors that have uneven surfaces – as many floors requiring finishing do.

[00123] As shown in Fig. 34, the floor finishing units 420 are positioned in a tandem arrangement. This tandem arrangement can be described in terms of longitudinally extending columns of floor finishing units 420. In other words, there are three columns of tandem floor finishing units 420 including two outboard columns A and B that are outboard of the main frame 414, and one inboard column C that is inboard of the main frame 414. The columns A, B, and C are laterally spaced apart such that the floor finishing units 420 diametrically overlap in the longitudinal direction of travel of the main frame 414.

[00124] Likewise, the floor finishing units 420 are longitudinally spaced apart such that they diametrically overlap in a direction transverse to the direction of travel of the main frame 414. The overlapping tandem arrangement can also be described in terms of sub-groups of floor finishing units 420. In other words, there are three sub-groups including a front trio T1, a middle trio T2, and a rear trio T3. The trios

T1, T2, and T3 are nested together in delta shaped patterns. Accordingly, the above-described overlapping arrangements ensure that no portion of a floor will go unfinished in the path of the machine 412.

[00125] Preferably, the trios T1, T2, T3 all incorporate different abrasive grit material. For example, it is desirable to use the following grits: a coarse grit, such as 20 or 30 grit, for the front trio T1 to remove an old floor coating or to rough up a bare floor; a medium grit, such as 60 grit, for the middle trio T2 to smooth out the roughed up floor; and a fine grit, such as 120 grit, for the rear trio T3 to finish sand the floor.

[00126] As shown in Fig. 29, the floor finishing units 420 are connected with electrical cords 464 that extend from the floor finishing units 420 along the struts 432 of the main frame 414, up the utilities sub-frame 416 and into the service panels 440. Each sub-group or trio of floor finishing units 420 is wired directly to and independently controlled by one of the three service panels 440. In turn, the service panels 440 are powered by power supply cords 466 with 110 V AC. The power supply cords 466 drag behind the finisher 400 and plug into an available outlet.

[00127] Similarly, but not shown, the floor finishing units 420 are connected with vacuum lines that extend from outlet nozzles 468 to one or more vacuum canisters. The vacuum lines preferably extend behind the finisher 400 and connect with a centrally located vacuum canister. Alternatively, the vacuum lines may connect to one or more canisters mounted on-board the pusher trailer 410, the main frame 414, or sub-frame 416. In yet another alternative, the vacuum lines may connect directly to a vacuum unit mounted on each floor finishing unit 420.

[00128] In operation, an operator should lower the height of the machine 412 by cranking the handles of the wheeled jacks 418 in the appropriate direction. The operator should be satisfied when most of the cap screws 458 are positioned approximately in the longitudinal middle of the slots 460 of the links 456, so as to enable the floor finishing units 420 to float up or down with deviations in the floor surface. This will help to avoid a non-contact condition, wherein one or more of the floor finishing units 420 might otherwise fail to maintain contact with the floor. Next, the operator ensures that the appropriate electrical and vacuum connections are in place, and then the operator sits in the seat of the pusher trailer 410. The operator then activates the floor finishing units 420 by activating appropriate levers on one or more of the three service panels 440. Subsequently, the operator activates the pusher trailer 410 according to the manufacturer's instructions. With one of his hands on the handles 438 of the machine 412, the operator engages the pusher trailer 410 in a forward drive mode. Then, the operator grasps the other of the handles 438 in order to steer the articulated riding floor finisher 400. Ordinarily, the operator will have activated all of the floor finishing units 420 and will drive the riding floor finisher 400 in any desired pattern across the floor. When backing up, or when traveling across already finished floor space, an operator may desire to stop and raise the machine 412 so as to avoid dragging the floor finishing units 420 across an already finished floor.

[00129] Referring now in general to Figures 35-38, there is provided according to yet another embodiment of the present invention, another power cleaning and sanding machine 500. The machine 500 generally includes a chassis 510 to provide structural support for a housing 512 which is mounted to the chassis 510, and

includes floor finishing units 514 that are mounted to the housing 512 for finishing a floor.

[00130] The chassis 510 includes a frame 516 that is welded together from square tube-stock including uprights 518 and cross members 520. Attached to the frame 516 at a lower portion thereof are support arms 522 for supporting the housing 512. The support arms 522 are preferably fastened with fasteners 524 such as bolt, cap screws, or the like, or may be welded to the frame 516. At each rearward end of the support arms 522, there is a wheel 526 rotatably mounted thereto, that permits the machine 500 to be moved about like a dolly or hand truck, typically when not in operation. At the opposite end of the frame 516, there are handles 528 welded to either the uprights 518 or one of the cross members 520, to facilitate movement of the machine 500. Finally, an electrical service panel 530 is mounted to the cross members 520 of the chassis 510. The service panel 530 is preferably a HOFFMAN type 12 disconnect enclosure that houses SIEMENS disconnect electronics.

[00131] The housing 512 includes a deck 532 that is preferably stamped or formed from sheet metal. The deck 532 includes a top or mounting surface 534, an underside or fastening surface (not shown), sides 536, and front and rear faces 538 and 540, that collectively define a chamber 542. The housing 512 also includes a skirt 544 that peripherally mounts to and surrounds the deck 532 and that seals or partially defines the chamber 542. The skirt 544 may be attached to the deck 532 by a hook-and-loop fastener, rivets, screws, and the like. Vacuum ports 546 are provided through the mounting surface 534 to fluidly communicate the chamber 542 externally of the housing 512. As is well known in the art, the vacuum ports 546 may be vented by either an on-board vacuum system or a remote vacuum

system (not shown). Inboard of the vacuum ports 546 there are located a pair of mounts 548 that are rigidly attached to the mounting surface 534 of the deck 532, such as by welding. The mounts 548 are pivotably attached to a forward end of the support arms 522 by pivot members 550, such as pins, bolts and nuts, and the like. Accordingly, the housing 512 is pivotably attached to the chassis 510.

[00132] The floor finishing units 514 include electric motors 552 that are mounted to the mounting surface 534 of the deck 532 of the housing 512. The electric motors are preferably three horsepower GLEASON or MARATHON ELECTRIC motors that are driven by NORTHERN INDUSTRIAL motor drives. The motors 552 are relatively high speed motors capable of about 3,500 RPM. As best shown in Figure 35, the units 514 are arranged in a front row 554 of three units 514 and back row 556 of two units 514, wherein the units 514 within the rows 554 and 556 are equally spaced apart in a lateral direction and the rows 554 and 556 are offset to define a delta pattern 558 of three units 514. To finish particularly wide aisles of large warehouses, it is preferable to arrange the floor finishing units 514 in a six by five arrangement. Each motor 552 is fastened to the deck 532 by four flexible mounts 560. As best shown in Figure 36A, the flexible mounts 560 include a fastener 562, such as a bolt or cap screw that extends through the deck 532 and threads into a portion of the motor 552. A spring 564 is interposed the deck 532 and a head 566 of the fastener 562. To allow flexible movement between the floor finishing units 514 and the housing 512 there is some clearance between the outer diameter of the fastener 562 and a passage 568 in the deck 532 through which the fastener 562 extends. Drive shafts 570 extend from the motors 552 and terminate in finishing discs 572 attached thereto, as is well known in the art. Finishing pads

574 are attached to the finishing discs 572, as is also well known in the art. The finishing units 514 are arranged as discussed above, such that the finishing discs 572 and/or finishing pads 574 diametrically overlap one another as the machine 500 travels in operation. Accordingly, all surface area of the floor underneath the deck 532 and within the footprint of the finishing discs 572 gets treated by the machine 500. As with the previously described embodiment, any one of the finishing discs and/or pads 572, 574 may have a different grit than any of the other finishing discs and/or pads 572, 574. Finally, the motors 552 are all electrically powered via wires 576 that communicate with the service panel 530. Accordingly, each floor finishing unit 514 is capable of independent operation. Moreover, each finishing disc 572 and/or finishing pads 574 are urged into contact with the floor by the direct overhead weight of a respective motor 552. Accordingly, the present invention is particularly effective as a result of the relatively high speed of the motors 552 combined with the weight of each motor 552 bearing down directly over the respective finishing disc 572.

[00133] The manufacture and assembly of the machine 500 is very simple compared to prior art floor finishing machines. First, the chassis 510 may be constructed of readily available tube stock, boilerplate material, fasteners, service panel, and off-the-shelf wheels. Second, the housing 512 may be constructed of bent and torched sheet metal, boilerplate material, rubber molding, and tube stock. Third, the floor finishing units 514 are primarily composed of off-the-shelf motors that are mounted to the housing 512 by standard fasteners and springs in a unique manner.

[00134] In operation, the machine 500 is activated by plugging a power cord (not shown) in a nearby power outlet, tilting the machine 500 backward as shown in

Figure 38, and throwing a main switch at the service panel 530. Preferably, the service panel 530 controls the operation of the vacuum system (not shown) and the motors 552. Once the motors 552 achieve a desired speed, an operator may begin floor finishing by tilting the machine 500 forward such that the housing 512 engages the floor and by pushing the machine 500 in a forward direction across the floor. Care should be taken, however, to keep the machine 500 moving across the floor when the motors 552 are operating and the housing 512 is lowered, due to the aggressive nature of this embodiment.

[00135] Another alternative embodiment is provided in Figures 39 and 40, that reduces the risk of gouging the floor with an aggressive floor sanding assembly. A power cleaning and sanding machine 600 generally includes a chassis 610 to provide fixed structural support for a rotatable housing 612, which is rotatably mounted to the chassis 610, and also includes floor finishing units 614 that are mounted to the housing 612 for finishing a floor.

[00136] The chassis 610 includes a frame 616 and a stator 618 attached to the frame 616, such as by welding. The frame 616 includes a generally planar deck 620 having a stator bore 622 formed in one end thereof, through which a portion of the stator 618 extends. At a generally opposite end of the deck 620, there is welded a base 624 that is supported by wheels 626. Upwardly from the base 624, a pair of uprights 628 extend and terminate in handles 630. A service panel 632 mounts to the uprights 628 atop reinforcements 634. The stator 618 is a generally cylindrical and stepped component having a first diameter 636 that pilots through the stator bore of the deck 620, and a second diameter 638. The first and second diameters 636, 638 together define a shoulder 640. Likewise the second diameter 638 and a

third diameter 642 together define another shoulder 644. The stator 618 further includes a main vacuum port 646 that is formed in internal vacuum passages 648 that extend generally longitudinally through the stator 618.

[00137] The housing 612 generally includes a mounting ring 650, a deck 652, and supports 654 connecting the deck 652 and mounting ring 650 together, such as by welding to each. A bearing 656 is interposed the mounting ring 650 and the shoulder 640 of the stator 618 to provide rotational support to the housing 612, such that the housing 612 is rotatable with respect to the housing 612. Similarly, another bearing 658 is interposed the mounting ring 650 and the deck 620 of the chassis 610. The supports 654 extend downwardly from the mounting ring 650 and attach to a mounting surface 660 of the housing deck 652. The housing 612 is further supported by the chassis 610 using yet another bearing 662 that is interposed the housing deck 652 and the second shoulder 644 of the stator 618. The deck 652 is preferably shaped as an annular ring that is fabricated from a flat sheet of metal such as boilerplate. An annular skirt 664 is attached to the periphery of the deck 652. Like the previously described embodiment, the deck 652 and skirt 664 define a chamber 666, which is ventilated by the vacuum passages 648 of the stator 618. As is well known in the art, the vacuum port 646 may be vented by either an on-board vacuum system or a remote vacuum system (not shown).

[00138] The floor finishing units 614 include electric motors 668 that are mounted to the mounting surface 660 of the deck 652 of the housing 612. As best shown in Figure 39, the units 614 are six in number, are equidistantly spaced apart, and are concentrically arranged about the operational axis A of the stator 618. Each motor 668 is fastened to the deck 652 by four flexible mounts 670, just like the previously

described embodiment. Drive shafts (not shown) extend from the motors 668 and terminate in finishing discs 672 attached thereto, as is well known in the art. Finishing pads 674 are attached to the finishing discs 672, as is also well known in the art. Accordingly, all surface area of the floor underneath the deck 652 and within the footprint of the finishing discs 672 gets treated by the machine 600. As with the previously described embodiments, any one of the finishing discs and/or pads 672, 674 may have a different grit than any of the other finishing discs and/or pads 672, 674. The motors 668 are all powered via wires 676 that communicate with the service panel 632 via a slip ring 678. Slip rings 678 are readily available devices and come in a number of styles and configurations, such as an annular ring as shown, or as a smaller hub and ring coupling. Slip rings are commercially available from a number of sources including MERCOTAC of Carlsbad, California. Accordingly, each floor finishing unit 614 is capable of independent operation. Moreover, each finishing disc 672 and/or finishing pads 674 are urged into contact with the floor by the direct overhead weight of a respective motor 668.

[00139] Finally, a motor and gear assembly 680 is provided for rotating the housing 612 relative to the chassis 610. The motor and gear assembly 680 is mounted to the deck 620 of the chassis 610 such that a pinion 682 rotatably engages an external ring gear 684 that is either mounted to the mounting ring 650 or is cut in the periphery thereof. The motor and gear assembly 680 is wired to the service panel 632 and powered thereby. Preferably, the motor and gear assembly 680 rotates the housing 612 in a direction opposite that of the rotation of the individual motors 668.

[00140] The manufacture and assembly of the machine 600 is very simple compared to prior art floor finishing machines having independently and collectively rotating finishing discs. First, the chassis 610 may be constructed of readily available tube stock, boilerplate material, aluminum, fasteners, service panel, and off-the-shelf wheels. Second, the housing 612 may be constructed of sheet metal, boilerplate material, rubber molding, and tube stock. Third, the floor finishing units 614 are primarily composed of off-the-shelf motors that are mounted to the housing 612 by standard fasteners and springs in a unique manner. Fourth, rotation of the housing is accomplished using a relatively straightforward pinion and ring gear arrangement, compared to the more complicated planetary gear drives and belt drives of prior art devices.

[00141] In operation, the machine 600 is activated by plugging a power cord (not shown) in a nearby power outlet, tilting the machine 600 slightly backward to bring the machine 600 out of working engagement with the floor, and throwing a main switch at the service panel 632. Preferably, the service panel 632 controls the operation of the vacuum system (not shown) and the motors 668, 680. Once the motors 668, 680 achieve a desired speed, an operator may begin floor finishing by tilting the machine 600 forward such that the housing 612 engages the floor and by pushing the machine 600 in a forward direction across the floor. Compared to the previously described embodiment, there is a reduced risk of gouging when the machine 600 moves across the floor when the motors 668 are operating and the housing 612 is lowered. This is because the independent rotation of the floor finishing units 614 in concert with the collective rotation of the floor finishing units

614 by way of the rotation of the entire housing 612, tends to reduce the operational wear of any given floor finishing unit on any given spot on the floor.

[00142] Each of the above-disclosed embodiments includes elements and features that may be interchanged with any and all of the other above-disclosed embodiments to produce a novel and nonobvious power cleaning and sanding machine.

[00143] Variations and modifications are possible without departing from the scope and spirit of the present invention as defined by the appended claims.